

## How to Share Your Testimony - Part 5 - Acts 22:14-16 – October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009

- Allow me to quickly bring you up to speed so you know what is happening here, because it's germane to our understanding of the text.
- Upon the Apostle's arrival in Jerusalem, a rumor was started, and thus a riot was started, all because they believed a false accusation.
- Because they wanted to kill Paul, he was taken into protective custody by the Roman guard and about to enter the Antonia Fortress.
- Before being put in this prison, Paul is given permission to speak to the mob, and he preaches the gospel in the form of his testimony.
- This is part five of a series titled; "How to Share Your Testimony." Paul is going to rise from the pages to teach us that God forgives sin.
- What we're about to discover may be one of the most, if not "the" most, powerful life freeing, and life giving truths in the entire Bible.
- It is for this reason that I've sensed from the Holy Spirit; that the Lord is directing my heart to take another week on just these verses.

### 1. Be prepared (Verse 1)

- The way Paul begins seems to indicate that he had not only anticipated this opportunity, but had actually been well prepared for it.

### 2. Speak their language (Verse 2)

- Paul could have spoken Greek but chooses to speak in the Hebrew tongue, knowing they would understand the language of their heart.

### 3. Find common ground (Verse 3a)

- Paul says he's a Jew born in Tarsus but brought up in Jerusalem so he would have common ground with the Greek and Hellenist Jews.

### 4. Earn their respect (Verses 3b-5)

- Paul allies himself to both Jewish factions when he tells them he was trained by Gamaliel the most respected Jewish Rabbi of their day.

### 5. Turn on the light (Verses 6-9)

- Instead of the curse of the law and what it couldn't do for them, he tells them about the light of the world and what He could do for them.

### 6. Keep it simple (Verses 10-11)

- When he asks Jesus what he's to do, he's just told to "simply" go to Damascus, then, he's led, like a child, by the hand and by faith.

### 7. Include the miraculous (Verses 12-13)

- After being blinded by the light, Paul tells how he received his sight when God, through Ananias, miraculously removed his blindness.

### 8. Highlight God's forgiveness (Verses 14-16)

- Paul tells how Ananias asks what he's waiting for and says get up be baptized and have your sins washed away by calling on the Lord.
- If the Apostle Paul had chosen to not communicate and highlight this, he would have in effect, gutted out the good news of the gospel.
- So too is this true for us. If the good news of God's forgiveness is gutted out of our lives, then sin will have dominion over our lives.
- If I've been the recipient of God's forgiveness and cleansing for my sin; then sin no longer has permission to control and dominate me.
- This is the good news and that's why Paul includes it and even highlights it when he tells them that he was forgiven for all his past sins.
- Paul not only tells them "that" he's forgiven and cleansed for all his sins, he also tells them "how" to be forgiven and cleansed from sin.
- The how is simply this; "It's in the calling upon, and confessing to the Lord, that the forgiveness for and cleansing come from the Lord."
- In other words, when sin remains un-confessed, then sin remains un-forgiven, and un-cleansed, and I will remain under sin's dominion.
- God has both made us and wired us with the need to confess our sin in order for us to have that releasing and freeing from our sin.
- We don't need to confess to God so He knows we need to confess to God that we know. When we do, we free ourselves from sin's grip.

"Confession is all important. We must confess our sins, if the faithful Lord is to forgive them. Confession is taking God's side against ourselves. It is the act of judging evil in the light of the Throne. It is like the unpacking of a box, in which one begins with the lighter things at the top, and works steadily down to the heavy articles underneath." F.B. Meyer

**1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. NIV

**Proverbs 28:13** He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. NIV

**Romans 6:14** For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. KJV

"The longer we hide sin, the longer it goes on condemning us and we get more and more under its dominion. ...The sin is one thing, but the superstructure of guilt the devil builds on it is another, and is sometimes far greater than the original sin on which it is built. To understand, then, the true nature of the dominion of sin and what are the devil's intentions in it is the first step into freedom. ... if at that cross sin lost its power to condemn our Substitute, it has also lost its power to condemn all those whose Substitute He became. If each one of them now returns to the Cross in confession, they may all reckon on this fact, lose their burden of guilt, and step into freedom. Whereas the law demands that we do our utmost (with no result but further condemnation...), grace points to Christ as having done all for us and bids us to reckon ourselves dead with Him to the power of our sins to condemn us any longer. ...If we take a long time to confess, we will be a long time under the dominion of sin. But the moment we humble ourselves and confess it all, we are forgiven, cleansed, set free from guilt and declared right with God – and all because of the age-abiding value in the eyes of God of the blood of Jesus. The foundation of guilt on which Satan built his superstructure is removed by God Himself; the superstructure itself comes tumbling down and the one imprisoned within it is set free." Roy Hession

- This is the why behind the “what” that Paul is saying in this, the sharing his testimony of how he came to Christ. He is now free in Christ.
- Free from what? Free from the dominion of his past sins, and make no mistake about it, Paul wasn’t lacking when it came to “past sin!”
- I suggest to you that there are perhaps many in this church today who’s hearts are paralyzed and plagued by past failures and sins.

“Do not let any of the things of the world or past mistakes paralyze your hearts. I believe there are Christians who have allowed some of their past mistakes to paralyze them. You were so bright and cheerful in your spiritual life once, and then you made some tragic mistake or had something happen to you. You got out of it somehow, and prayed and wept your way out of it. But it did something to you, and now you cannot lick it. Past wrongs that have been done to you, past failures, times you thought you were going to win and did not, or present sins or discouragement-these things are not mental at all. They are deeper than that; they are subconscious, and they prevent us from believing. I most urgently exhort you, and I trust God Almighty to deliver you; to sponge that out of your spirit; to sponge that out of your heart so you are not hindered by unbelief.” A.W. Tozer “Rut, Rot or Revival: The Condition of the Church,” pp. 162-163

“Brethren, we have been declared “Not Guilty!” by the highest court in all the universe. Still there are honest Christians, earnestly seeking the face of God, who cannot seem to break loose and find real freedom. The grave clothes trip them up every time they try to move on a little faster. Satan uses their past sins to terrify them. Now, on the basis of grace as taught in the Word of God, when God forgives a man, He trusts him as though he had never sinned. God did not have mental reservations about any of us when we became His children by faith. When God forgives a man, He doesn’t think, ‘I will have to watch this fellow because he has a bad record.’ No, He starts with him again as though he had just been created and as if there had been no past at all! That is the basis of our Christian assurance--and God wants us to be happy in it.” A.W. Tozer “I Talk Back to the Devil,” pp. 6-7

**Psalm 103:11-12** 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. NIV

- May I ask you what Ananias asked Paul; “now what are you waiting for?” Get up, call on His name, and have your sins washed away!